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COLONEL HANS CHRISTIAN HEG

THEODORE C. BLEGEN

Hans Christian Heg was born at Lier, near Drammen, Norway, on December 21, 1829—about four and one-half years after the pathfinders of the Norwegian emigration to America sailed out from Stavanger for the New World. Hans was one of the four children of an innkeeper, named Even Hansen Heg, and his wife. Drammen was a small city in the southern part of Norway, a few miles southwest from the capital, Christiania. Its inhabitants were in close touch with the emigration movement from its earliest stages. Ole Nattestad's little book describing his journey to the United States was published in Drammen in 1839;¹ and in the spring of that year, his brother, Ansten Nattestad, with about one hundred emigrants, sailed from Drammen for New York.² The Heg family was, naturally, influenced by these events; America and its golden opportunities had become the most interesting topic of the day in its part of the world.

A group of about forty emigrants who failed to secure accommodation aboard the ship carrying Ansten Nattestad's company sailed from Skien in the spring of 1839. Led by John Nelson Luraas, they intended originally to make their way to the Norwegian settlement in Illinois. Upon their arrival in Milwaukee, however, they abandoned this plan and located instead on the shores of Lake Muskego, a short distance south of Milwaukee, in modern Waukesha County, Wisconsin.³ During the winter of the same year two emigrants from Drammen, Sören Backe and

¹ A translation of this book, by Rasmus B. Anderson, is in the *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, I, 149-86.

² Theodore C. Blegen, "Two Norse Argonauts: Ole and Ansten Nattestad," *The North Star* (Minneapolis, Minn.), I, 420-22; II, 18-21.

³ *Billed-Magazin*, I, 7, 10, 11. George T. Flom, *History of Norwegian Immigration to the United States*. . . to 1848 (Iowa City, Ia., 1909), 119-21.



COLONEL HANS CHRISTIAN HEG
From a portrait in Grand Army Memorial Hall, State Capitol, Madison

Johannes Johanneson, settled on the shores of Wind Lake, near Muskego.⁴ Even Heg may have been contemplating emigration for some time, but his decision seems to have been deferred until he received encouraging letters from these two acquaintances of his.⁵

In the spring of 1840 Even Heg and his wife, with their four children, started on the long journey to distant Wisconsin. The sale of his property at Lier enabled Heg to embark with considerable means in his possession—far more than the average emigrant had. He became the leader of a party including about thirty persons from Drammen and a smaller group from the district of Voss. On May 17 they set sail from Drammen in the same ship that had carried the Nattestad group the year before. After touching at Gothenborg, Sweden, where a cargo of iron was secured, the ship sailed for America, reaching New York eleven weeks later. The immigrants followed the usual route to the west, going by river and canal to Buffalo, and thence by steamer on the Great Lakes to Milwaukee. The majority of the party disembarked here under Even Heg's leadership, though some of those from Voss continued the journey with the boat to Chicago. The objective of Even Heg was Muskego. The distance between Milwaukee and Muskego may now be covered in an hour by trolley, but for these immigrants in 1840 it was an arduous day's trip over a strange trail.⁶

Muskego was a typical pioneer community.⁷ Hans Heg came to this settlement at the age of eleven and passed the remaining years of his youth amid its frontier conditions. His father, Even Heg, soon became the acknowledged leader of the colony, by virtue of his character as well as his

⁴ *Billed-Magazin*, I, 11-12.

⁵ Rasmus B. Anderson, *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration (1821-1840): Its Causes and Results* (4th ed., Madison, 1906), 277-78. Cf. Flom, *op. cit.*, 157-60.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 152, 159, 200-201. *Billed-Magazin*, I, 12-13.

⁷ See A. O. Barton, "The Old Muskego Settlement," *Waukesha Freeman*, Sept. 7, 14, 21, 1916. H. R. Holand, "Muskego," in *Symra*, III (1907), 187-96. *Billed-Magazin*, I, 10-13. Anderson, *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, 266-84.

financial means. Shortly after his arrival he purchased the farm of John Nelson Luraas, leader of the settlers of 1839.⁸ This farm became the Mecca of hundreds of Norwegians in search of homes in Wisconsin and the West.⁹ Here they received invaluable aid from Heg and his associates. Hospitable and resourceful, Even Heg was always ready to do his utmost for his compatriots. Especial interest attaches to the large barn which he erected in 1843. The small log cabins of the settlers could not accommodate the great numbers of immigrants who passed through Muskego on their way to Koshkonong and other settlements. Heg's barn was open to all, and every summer saw it thronged with large parties of newcomers who made it their home during the first days and weeks after their long journey from Norway. After consulting with the Muskego settlers in regard to the best lands for settlement, they started westward. For some years Muskego had the distinction of being the objective point of the majority of the Norwegian immigrants to America.¹⁰ Not only was the Heg barn a haven for the new arrivals, but it served for a long time as the social and religious center of the community as well. Before the arrival of a minister, lay services were conducted in the barn, at which Even Heg, among others, preached. The famous pioneer minister, C. L. Clausen, preached here upon his arrival at Muskego in 1843. Here he organized a congregation during the same year. Sunday school classes were held in the barn; in 1844 the Reverend Mr. Clausen confirmed the first class of children there. The barn was the scene of baptisms as well as marriages. In 1844 an interesting double wedding was celebrated in "Even Heg's new, home-sawed, oak frame barn." During the cholera epidemics which desolated the colony in the forties the barn

⁸ Anderson, *op. cit.*, 276.

⁹ *Billed-Magazin*, I, 12-13.

¹⁰ The settlement on Koshkonong Prairie in Dane County soon took precedence over Muskego in this respect, however.

served as a hospital. Typical of the spirit of the community was its enterprise in building a church, the first Norwegian Lutheran church in America, begun in 1843 and completed two years later. It is interesting to note that the ground for the new church was donated by the father of Hans Heg.¹¹

Hans Heg became known in Muskego as a wide-awake and gifted boy. The financial means of his father's family, while somewhat more ample than the average, were nevertheless insufficient to permit Hans to secure a higher education. As the son of an able and enterprising father, however, he had good opportunities and used them to advantage. He took pains to learn the English language thoroughly; at an early age he became familiar with the essential ideals and customs of America and informed himself upon the political questions of the day.¹² It was customary for Muskego settlers to accompany parties of immigrants to the newer places of settlement, and Hans in this way made frequent trips to the Jefferson, Rock, and Koshkonong Prairie settlements. An alert and keen young observer, he developed as a result of these excursions a deeper insight into American conditions.¹³ On the most vital question of the time, slavery and its spread, he held positive views some years before he himself became of age. In this connection one circumstance possesses peculiar interest, not only with respect to the molding of the principles of Hans Heg, but also because of its significance for the attitude of the Norwegian element in America as a whole on the slavery question.

¹¹ *Billed-Magazin*, I, 12-13, has an account of the Heg barn and social conditions. See Flom, *op. cit.*, 160-61; Anderson, *First Chapter of Norwegian Immigration*, 278-79. J. W. C. Dietrichson, *Reise blandt de norske Emigranter i "De forenede nordamerikanske Fristater."* (Stavanger, 1846—reprinted Madison, Wis., 1896), 25 ff. contains a description of religious conditions in the settlement. Cf. J. A. Bergh, *Den norsk lutherske Kirkes Historie i Amerika* (Minneapolis, 1914), 11, 15-20.

¹² Knud Langeland, "Oberst H. C. Heg," in J. A. Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie (15de Wisconsin Regiment), En kortfattet Historie om dets Organization og de Feldt-Toge, hvori det tog Del* (La Crosse, Wis., 1869), 103. Langeland was an intimate friend of Colonel Heg.

¹³ Langeland *Nordmaendene i Amerika; Nogle Optegnelser om de norske Udvandring til Amerika* (Chicago, 1889), 46.

This was the establishment of the first Norwegian newspaper published in the United States.

This paper was called *Nordlyset* (The Northern Light). As early as 1845 James D. Reymert, a prominent member of the Muskego community, with others, urged the establishment of a newspaper. Two years later it became a reality, the necessary funds having been supplied by Even Heg and Sören Backe. The publishers were Heg, Backe, and Reymert, the latter being the editor. The early numbers of this newspaper, it is interesting to note, were printed in Even Heg's log cabin. The first number contained among other matters a translation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence; at the head of the editorial column appeared a cut of the American flag. The significant point with respect to *Nordlyset* is that it became the Norwegian organ of the Free-soil party. In supporting the principles of this party it forecast accurately the course which the Norwegians in the United States were to take in the stirring political events of the next few decades. The office of *Nordlyset* became the political center of the community and was visited by many candidates for office who sought the support of the paper with a view to getting the "Norwegian vote." Hans Heg was eighteen years old when *Nordlyset* was established; in its offices, where he met many politicians, his own political talent began to develop.¹⁴ In the following year, 1848, he was an active worker for the Free-soil party.

Gold was discovered in 1848 in the Sacramento Valley, and the following year witnessed the remarkable flocking of the gold hunters to California. The lure of gold stirred the spirit of adventure in Hans Heg. In 1849, at the age of twenty, with three companions he set out to join the army

¹⁴ Langeland, in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 104. See *Emigranten* (Inmansville, Wisconsin), May 20, 1853; Carl Hansen, "Pressen til Borgerkrigens slutning," in J. B. Wist, *Norsk-Amerikanernes Festskrift 1914* (Decorah, Iowa, 1914), 10 ff. A. O. Barton, "The Beginnings of the Norwegian Press in America," *Wis. Hist. Soc. Proceedings* for 1916, 190-96.

of Forty-niners. On March 26 the four young men, equipped with a solid wagon and two yoke of oxen, started on the long overland journey.¹⁵ Hannibal, Missouri, was reached on April 6, and St. Joseph on April 29.¹⁶ Some of Heg's letters, published in *Nordlyset*, give interesting details of the trip. Bad roads, lack of bridges, and other difficulties caused delays. Cholera in St. Joseph and rumors of danger from Indians caused many gold-seekers to turn back. But Heg and his companions went on.¹⁷ In a letter from Savannah Landing, May 2, Heg wrote of the crowds of people waiting to cross the Missouri. His company of four now had four yoke of oxen and one horse; their load weighed three thousand pounds.¹⁸ They went on to Fort Laramie, and thence to Green River, a distance of four hundred miles, in the course of which no grass for the oxen was found. South Pass was reached on July 4 and Salt Lake City on July 16. Mormons whom they met on the way told them that earnings of the gold miners in California averaged from four hundred to a thousand dollars a week. As Heg and his comrades proceeded westward, they were in good spirits despite the difficulties encountered.¹⁹ At length, after a journey of many adventures and much suffering, they reached California. Here Heg remained two years, experiencing the usual hardships and vicissitudes of fortune of the gold miners. In one of his letters of this period, written at Weaversville, California, he wrote, "We have been very actively engaged during the whole winter in digging gold. But it is becoming scarce, and little is found. Last fall, when we arrived, we built a log house, ten feet square in size, equipping it with a good fireplace, etc. . . . I and Hanson have worked together since we came here in September, and we have saved one thousand dollars, besides

¹⁵ *Nordlyset*, March 29, 1849, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Nordlyset*, May 17, 1849.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Nordlyset*, June 7, 1849.

¹⁹ *Nordlyset*, Oct. 11, 1849.

our expenses, which have amounted to about three hundred dollars In my opinion the best part of the gold crop has now been harvested, and those who come out next year will find themselves much disappointed.”²⁰ After two years in the West, and just at a time when he was beginning to have real success in his mining ventures, Heg received news from home that his father had died on August 17, 1850.²¹ His mother had died in 1842, and it was clearly Hans Heg’s duty to assume charge of the farm and the care of his younger brothers and sister. Accordingly, in 1851 he returned to Muskego.²²

Upon his return he took over the three hundred and twenty acre farm which had belonged to his father, and undertook the duties of a farmer. In 1851, shortly after his return, he married Gunhild Einong, a daughter of a Norwegian immigrant of 1843.²³ Heg was now twenty-two years of age and had already won the respect and confidence not only of the Norwegian settlers of the community, but of many of the native Americans of the vicinity as well. Politics attracted him, and he was soon looked upon as a rising young politician. An ardent Free-soiler, he was soon to affiliate with the new Republican party. Slavery was abhorrent to him, and the sincerity of his views was later to be proved by the supreme sacrifice. A writer who knew Heg personally stresses the free and unhindered development of his principles in that American atmosphere, “so pregnant with freedom, equality, and the spirit of brotherhood,”²⁴ in which he lived. These things were indeed the very life of the simple pioneer society of Muskego; and in

²⁰ Quoted by Langeland, in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 104.

²¹ *Democraten*, (Racine, Wis.), Aug. 31, 1850.

²² Sketch in *Emigranten* (Madison, Wis.), Sept. 12, 1859, p. 2.

²³ Mrs. H. C. Heg is still living. A venerable lady of eighty-five years, she resides in Elizabeth, New Jersey, with her daughter Mrs. Fowler. Some months ago the writer addressed a letter to Mrs. Heg inquiring whether the letters and papers of Colonel Heg had been preserved. Mrs. Heg replied that she had carefully kept her husband’s Civil War letters and some other papers, but that coincident with a recent thorough cleaning of the attic, they had all disappeared. They were doubtless burned.

²⁴ Langeland, in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 104.

Heg there is evident a deep faith in American ideals, in democracy, equality, and human freedom. A champion of such principles, Heg was put forward in 1852 as a Free-soil candidate for the state legislature. The antislavery Whigs also had a candidate in the field. The Democratic candidate, Thomas West, was elected, having a small majority over Heg.²⁵

Heg entered actively into political and civic work in his locality. In 1852 he became a supervisor in the Town of Norway, Racine County, and also a justice of the peace. In 1854 he was chosen chairman of the board of supervisors. He was re-elected in 1855. As chairman of the town board he was a member of the county board; in 1855 he was chosen as one of three commissioners to superintend the Racine County Poor Farm, in the western district. In 1857 he was again selected as a Poorhouse commissioner, but was too busy to retain the town office, to which his brother was elected. The duties of these local offices he appears to have discharged faithfully; with their successful execution he gained the confidence of an increasing number of citizens.²⁶ In the fall of 1857 he was a delegate from Racine County to the Republican state convention at Madison. A group of Norwegians met in Madison and proposed the nomination of Heg for some state office as a recognition of the Norwegian element in Wisconsin. Congressman Potter spoke in the convention for Heg and the Norwegians, but only twenty-three votes for Heg were forthcoming, and he received no nomination.²⁷ In 1859 Heg determined to give up farming and removed to Waterford, where in company with two Americans he operated a mill and a general merchandise store.²⁸

His stay at Waterford was of short duration, however. Political recognition of a substantial character came to him

²⁵ *Ibid.* Cf. *Emigranten*, Sept. 12, 1859, p. 2.

²⁶ A summary of Heg's career in local politics is presented in *Emigranten*, Sept. 12, 1859, p. 2. Cf. *History of Racine and Kenosha Counties* (Chicago, 1879), 315, 329.

²⁷ *Emigranten*, Sept. 12, 1859, p. 2.

²⁸ Langeland, in Johnson, *op. cit.*, 105.

in his nomination by the Republican state convention of 1859 as a candidate for the office of State Prison Commissioner of Wisconsin. Accepting the nomination, Heg traveled about the state, making political addresses in Norwegian in the Norse settlements and in English elsewhere.²⁹ Many Germans and Scandinavians at this time believed that the Republican party was tainted with Know Nothingism, and Heg's place on the Republican ticket in Wisconsin was undoubtedly a Republican bid for the Scandinavian vote.³⁰ Heg himself regarded the nomination as a compliment to the Norwegians and effectively maintained that the Republicans were not nativistic.³¹ Some of the newspaper comments on Heg are of interest.³² The *Milwaukee Free Democrat* said, "Mr. Heg is completely Americanized, speaks English as clearly and fluently as a native citizen."³³ In some quarters it was even charged that Heg was so completely Americanized that he was indifferent to the Norwegians.³⁴ In his addresses, however, Heg spoke with pride of his Norwegian blood and of the Norwegian element in Wisconsin.³⁵ At the subsequent

²⁹ In one of his speeches, at Madison, Heg said, "I was aboard the Anti-Slavery ship when it had to make voyages up Salt River. I am still on the same ship. But the crew is numerous and confident. The outcome is no longer uncertain. The victory will be ours." Quoted in *ibid.*, 105. Cf. *Emigranten*, Oct. 2, 1859, p. 2, with extracts from *Wisconsin State Journal*. On Heg's nomination see *Emigranten*, Sept. 5, 1859, p. 2.

³⁰ In 1856 a Norwegian newspaper published at Madison maintained that the Know Nothing element in the Republican party was so strong that it was able effectively to control the state convention in that year. It called attention to many evidences of Know Nothing influences within the ranks of the Republicans, and called upon the Scandinavians to have nothing to do with that party. *Den Norske Amerikaner*, April 19, May 3, May 10, and May 31, 1856. *Emigranten*, more influential than *Den Norske Amerikaner*, gradually took sides with the Republicans and defended the party from attacks both by *Den Norske Amerikaner* and its successor, *Nordstjernen*. See, for example, *Nordstjernen*, July 22, 1857. Both the Republican and Democratic parties in Wisconsin in 1857 adopted strong planks against nativism, but charges persisted, especially from the Germans. Considerable light on this subject may be found in Bruncken, "The Political Activity of Wisconsin Germans 1854-60," *Wis. Hist. Soc. Proceedings* for 1901, especially 197 ff.

³¹ *Emigranten*, Oct. 10, 1859, p. 2, quoting from the *Wisconsin State Journal*.

³² *Emigranten*, Oct. 3, 1859, with extracts from the *Waupun Times* of Sept. 21, the *Watertown Volkszeitung* of Sept. 24, and the *Milwaukee Free Democrat* of Sept. 19.

³³ *Milwaukee Free Democrat*, Sept. 14, 1859, quoted in *Emigranten*, Sept. 26, 1859, p. 2.

³⁴ *Emigranten*, Oct. 31, 1859, p. 2.

³⁵ *Emigranten*, Oct. 24, 1859, p. 2, with a report of Heg's speech at Monroe, Wisconsin

election he received a majority of 2,673.³⁶ Not only was he elected, but he had become well known in the state, a fact of considerable importance to him later.

At Waupun Heg made a creditable record and displayed good administrative ability. Improvements were made under his direction in regard to machinery and plans for work by prisoners. After a visit to the Illinois prison at Joliet, Heg opened a cooper shop and a broom shop at Waupun.³⁷ He was opposed to the practice of electing prison commissioners every two years and favored appointment with permanent tenure.³⁸ After careful study he advocated the principle of the indeterminate sentence, now so generally adopted.³⁹ His reports contain some statements worthy of quotation. "The penalty of the law," he said, "is justly due to its transgressor, but in the midst of deserved wrath, it is God-like to be merciful."⁴⁰ Again, "Experience has confirmed my conviction that a mild and merciful application of the rules of discipline is sufficient in all cases to reduce the most hardened offenders to obedience."⁴¹ He believed that prisons were established not simply for the punishment of offenders, but also "to reclaim the wandering and save the lost."⁴² He wrote, "Nothing will arouse the virtuous aspirations of a fallen man so powerfully as the conviction that it still lies in his power to regain the rights he has forfeited, and that he yet can be respected by society as a fellow-man."⁴³ Rated highly in respect alike to honesty, efficiency, and economy, his administration of the prison assured him of renomination in 1861.⁴⁴

³⁶ *Emigranten*, Nov. 21 and 23, 1859. Heg appears to have been the first Norwegian elected to a state office in the United States.

³⁷ *Annual Report of the State Prison Commissioner, for the Year ending Oct. 1, 1860*, 7.

³⁸ *Annual Report of the State Prison Commissioner, for the Year ending Sept. 30, 1861*, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁴ Considerable information about Heg's administration, with anecdotes and stories illustrating his methods, is in "En Tur til Wisconsin Statsfængsel," *Emigranten*, Aug. 3 and 19, 1861. See also Langeland, "Oberst H. C. Heg." in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 105-106.

The year 1861 marks the conclusion of Heg's services as commissioner, however. The crisis had been reached in the relations of North and South. President Lincoln had called for volunteers for the great task of preserving the Union. The Civil War had begun. The testing time had come for Americans of whatever ancestry. Not more than seventy-five thousand Scandinavians were in the United States in 1861. The great immigration from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark was barely past its beginning stages. "Yet the one dramatic and heroic chapter in the whole story of the progress of the Scandinavians in America," wrote Dr. Babcock in 1914, "is that dealing with their part in that great struggle, in which many hundreds of them gave their strength and their lives for the unity and safety of their adopted country no less bravely and no less cheerfully than did the native-born American Everywhere the story of their services in the army is creditable, and it is not strange that the survivors are proud of their war records as the badge of loyal Americanism. They did not go into the war for the mere love of adventure, nor for love of fighting, for men in large numbers do not leave their families and their half-developed farms for flimsy and temporary reasons. They loved the new country they had made their own, with a love that was measurable in the high terms of sacrifice, even to the shedding of blood and to death."⁴⁵ It must not be forgotten, however, that Germans, Irish, and other nationalities rallied to the cause in the same spirit. The Scandinavians were not exceptional.

Men of Scandinavian blood joined the colors with enthusiasm in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and other states in which they had but recently settled. Scandinavian names are to be found in the membership of very many of the northwestern regiments. In Wisconsin, the stronghold of the Scandinavian element, a movement was

⁴⁵ Kendric C. Babcock, *The Scandinavian Element in the United States* (University of Illinois, *Studies in the Social Sciences*, III, no. 3, Urbana, 1914), 75, 78.

started in the first months of the war to raise a Norwegian regiment. The energies of Hans C. Heg were early enlisted in the cause. His name, for example, heads generously a list of Waupun subscribers for the benefit of families of volunteers as early as April 26, 1861.⁴⁶ On May 7 he offered the convict labor at Waupun to be utilized in the making of uniforms. "We are ready to take hold at any time," he wrote.⁴⁷ On August 20 a call to Wisconsin came from Secretary Cameron for five additional regiments. Governor Randall of Wisconsin officially asked that one of these regiments be composed of Germans.⁴⁸ Probably influenced by this idea, J. A. Johnson of Madison opened a roll on August 31 for the recruiting of a Scandinavian company, calling for at least eighty-three men.⁴⁹ On September 14 the Norwegian newspaper *Emigranten* announced that Johnson's call had met with a good response.⁵⁰ K. K. Jones of Illinois suggested both to Johnson and to Heg that a Scandinavian regiment might be organized. Somewhat before this Heg had informed Johnson of his intention to go to war, and it is possible that he had already conceived the idea of a Scandinavian regiment. His resignation as Prison Commissioner had been sent to the Governor, who refused to accept it. When plans for the proposed regiment were somewhat more definitely formed, it was decided to have Heg's name presented for renomination in the state Republican convention in the belief that such action would add to his prestige and stimulate recruiting.⁵¹ On September 25, 1861 a meeting of leading Scandinavians was held at the state capitol, Madison. At this gathering it was

⁴⁶ William DeLoss Love, *Wisconsin in the War of the Rebellion* (Chicago, 1866), 131, with reference to Waupun *Times*, April 26, 1861.

⁴⁷ H. C. Heg to W. H. Watson, May 7, 1861. Ms. in collection of Civil War papers from Governor's office in Wisconsin Historical Library.

⁴⁸ *Emigranten*, Aug. 24, 1861.

⁴⁹ *Emigranten*, Sept. 2, 1861.

⁵⁰ The same issue contained an interesting advertisement calling attention to the organization of one or possibly two companies in Goodhue County, Minnesota, for the Third Minnesota Regiment. *Emigranten*, Sept. 14, 1861.

⁵¹ Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 15-16 and ff.

formally decided to raise the regiment; a letter was sent to Governor Randall informing him of this decision and petitioning for the appointment of Hans C. Heg as colonel.⁵² The Governor was found to be in full sympathy with the project, and on October 1, 1861 a commission as Colonel was issued to Heg.⁵³ Heg was renominated for the office of Prison Commissioner with great acclaim.⁵⁴ In declining the honor he called for the selection of a "courageous, liberal, and humane man" in his place.⁵⁵ He then devoted himself vigorously to the effort to secure a hearty response to the call for volunteers. The selection of Heg as colonel was hailed with enthusiasm both in the English and in the Norwegian newspapers in Wisconsin. A typical editorial, taken from *Emigranten*, reads: "Young, powerful, and attractive, honorable, unimpeachably honest, to a high degree considerate of the welfare of his subordinates, with a splendid fund of practical, sound sense, and with the increased knowledge of men and things which his work as a state official has given him, he is the best man of all the Norwegians in America whom we know to lead such an undertaking. Our countrymen can gather about him as their chief with unqualified trust."⁵⁶

⁵² This letter, dated Madison Sept. 25, 1861, is in Civil War Ms. from Governor's office, Wisconsin Historical Library. It reads:

Sir:

The undersigned, as a Committee, appointed by a meeting of Scandinavians from different parts of the State, assembled here at Madison today—have been assigned the duty of informing Your Excellency that said meeting has passed a resolution to raise a Scandinavian Brigade for the war now pending in this our adopted Country; And that we recommend the following Gentlemen to be appointed as follows:

Hon. Hans C. Heg as Colonel
K. K. Jones as Lieut. Col.

Believing that a movement like this for the defence of our Country and our Flag will meet the approbation and support of the Government, we respectfully remain
Your obedient Servants:

J. A. Johnson

C. F. Solberg

S. Samuelson

K. J. Fleischer

B. W. Suckow

Chr. Winge

⁵³ *Emigranten*, Oct. 5, 1861.

⁵⁴ The Madison *Wisconsin State Journal*, *Janesville Daily Gazette*, *Milwaukee Free Democrat*, and other newspapers are quoted on Heg and his renomination, in *Emigranten*, Oct. 5, 1861.

⁵⁵ *Emigranten*, Oct. 12, 1861.

⁵⁶ *Emigranten*, Oct. 5, 1861.

Recruiting officers were chosen and began their work in the Norwegian settlements. In the Norwegian as well as in the English newspapers effective aid was given to the campaign. *Emigranten*, of Madison, deserves special mention for its co-operation in this connection. In placing the American flag at the head of its editorial column after the war began, it was typical of the Norwegian press in general, and it devoted much space to the plan for a Norwegian regiment. On September 28 *Emigranten* published an appeal signed by ten leading Scandinavians calling upon the people of their blood in the United States to help make the organization of the regiment a success. Southern victories showed plainly that only by a united and powerful effort could the Union be saved; the proposed regiment gave to the Scandinavians of the West a unique opportunity to enter the service; and finally, it was pointed out, other racial elements in the population were taking similar steps and the Scandinavians could not permit themselves to be outmatched by the Germans and the Irish.⁵⁷ In supporting this appeal editorially, *Emigranten* called in the same issue for the organization of "at least one regiment." Throughout the autumn of 1861 several stirring calls were written by Colonel Heg and spread broadcast. "The government of our adopted country is in danger," he wrote on October 5. "That which we learned to love as freemen in our old Fatherland—our freedom—our government—our independence—is threatened with destruction. Is it not our duty as brave and intelligent citizens to extend our hands in defense of the cause of our country and of our own homes?"⁵⁸ On November 16 he wrote, "Come then, young Norsemen, and

⁵⁷ The call was addressed to all able-bodied Scandinavians in the United States. It was signed by H. C. Heg, Adolph Sorenson, Knud Langeland, J. A. Johnson, K. J. Fleischer, Chr. Winge, S. Samuelson, Ole Torgersen, C. Fr. Solberg, and Chr. Colding. *Emigranten*, Sept. 28, 1861.

⁵⁸ *Emigranten*, Oct. 5, 1861. In this call Heg asked for a thousand men—Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. He said: "The officers of the regiment will be men who speak the Scandinavian languages. Thus an opportunity to enter the service is afforded those Scandinavians who do not yet speak English."

take part in defending our country's cause, and thus fulfill a pressing duty which everyone who can do it owes to the land in which he lives. Let us band together and deliver untarnished to posterity the old honorable name of Norsemen."⁵⁹

The recruiting and the organization of the regiment—the Fifteenth Wisconsin—were carried forward rapidly under the supervision of Colonel Heg. The regiment was assembled at Camp Randall, Madison, in December, 1861;⁶⁰ by the following February its number had reached the required minimum. The prospective soldiers had their first real taste of military life at Camp Randall, their experiences here being typical of those of all the thousands of Wisconsin soldiers who were here prepared for the arduous duties awaiting them in the South. In February, 1862 there were about three thousand men at the camp, two other regiments being also in process of organization. Much time—in both mornings and afternoons—was devoted to drill, in the elements of which the men of the Fifteenth were well grounded before their departure from Madison.⁶¹ Gradually the regiment was recruited to a strength of about nine hundred, and it eagerly awaited orders to move. The great majority were of Norwegian blood, though there were some Swedes and Danes, and a handful of Americans and Germans. Not a few of the soldiers of the Fifteenth were immigrants of but a few weeks' standing. Bersven Nelson, for example, reached La Crosse from Norway on July 16 and was in the service less than four months later.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Emigranten*, Nov. 16, 1861. Nine hundred men were needed, of whom six hundred had come in at the time this call was written. It should be mentioned that *Emigranten* made up a special number composed of articles from its issues of Oct. 5 and 12, dealing with the regiment and the war in general, which was widely circulated as an aid to recruiting.

⁶⁰ Bersven Nelson, "Optegnelser fra Borgerkrigen" in Waldemar Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter* (Eau Claire, Wis., 1916), 16-17. This diary (pages 15-61) covers the whole period of the service of the Fifteenth Wisconsin and is a valuable source of information. An interesting article on the regiment at Camp Randall is in *Emigranten*, Dec. 21, 1861. See also *Emigranten*, Jan. 20, Feb. 3, and Feb. 10, 1862.

⁶¹ *Emigranten*, Feb. 17 and 24, 1862, Nelson, "Optegnelser fra Borgerkrigen," in Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Most of the recruits, however, came from the older settlements. A supposedly authentic list of the members of the Fifteenth Wisconsin, recently published, contains 890 names.⁶³ Practically all of these joined before the regiment went south, though some entered later. Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois, in addition to Wisconsin, were well represented in the regiment. Heg himself visited certain Norwegian settlements in all of these states during the recruiting campaign.⁶⁴ Typical of the names of Heg's warriors were Olsen, Hanson, Peterson, Johnson, Thompson, and Erickson. There were four Ole Olsons in Company F; Company E boasted three Ole Ericksons; and Company B matched this with three Ole Andersons. In the regiment as a whole there were no less than one hundred fifteen men whose first name was Ole.⁶⁵ The names chosen for the regimental companies were unique and interesting. Among them were the St. Olaf Rifles, the Wergeland Guards, Odin's Rifles, Norway Bear Hunters, Scandinavian Mountaineers, Heg's Rifles, Rock River Rangers, and Clausen's Guards.⁶⁶

When the regiment left for St. Louis on March 2, 1862, the Madison station was thronged with hundreds of friends and relatives assembled to bid goodbye to the soldiers and cheer them.⁶⁷ Upon its arrival at Chicago, the soldiers were met by "Nora Lodge," a Scandinavian society, which entertained them and presented them with a flag, "having, on the one side the American colors, and, on the reverse the

⁶³ A. L. Lien, "Liste over nordmaend blandt Wisconsin tropper i borgerkrigen: IV, 15 Regiment Wis. Vol. Inf.," in *Samband*, April, 1914, 339-58. Cf. *Roster of Wisconsin Volunteers, War of the Rebellion, 1861-65* (Madison, 1886), I, 804-829.

⁶⁴ Heg was at Waupun, Oct. 3, 1861, Chicago, Oct. 12, Cambridge, Oct. 18, Pleasant Springs, Oct. 19, and in the latter part of the month at Decorah, Iowa, and in Fillmore and Houston counties, Minnesota. *Emigranten*, Oct. 12 and 19, 1861. Captain Grinager of Company K was from Freeborn County, Minnesota, and the majority in his company were from Minnesota and Iowa. In Company A there were many from Chicago and other parts of Illinois.

⁶⁵ *Samband*, April, 1914, 339-58.

⁶⁶ Clausen was a prominent pioneer Norwegian Lutheran minister who served as the first chaplain of the regiment. See Svein Strand, "Pastor C. L. Clausen," *Symra*, IX, 204-223.

⁶⁷ A long account of the departure of the regiment for the South, by C. F. Solberg, is in *Emigranten*, March 17, 1862, 2-3.

American and Norwegian arms united, the Norwegian being the picture of a lion with an axe, on a red field.”⁶⁸

During the next three years the Fifteenth Wisconsin played a valorous part in the operations of the Union forces in Kentucky, Tennessee, and northern Georgia.⁶⁹ When mustered out of service near the end of the war, its surviving members were veterans of more than a score of severe engagements. Among the more important of these were Island No. 10, Perryville, Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, Chattanooga (Missionary Ridge), Resaca, New Hope Church, and Kenesaw Mountain. Almost one-third of the entire regiment died during the war as a result of wounds or disease. In respect of mortality the percentage of its losses places the Fifteenth Wisconsin high in the list of all the gallant Wisconsin regiments of the Civil War.⁷⁰

The history of the Fifteenth Wisconsin and the biography of Colonel Heg are practically identical from the autumn of 1861, at Madison, to September 20, 1863, at Chickamauga. With the exception of a few brief leaves of

⁶⁸ P. G. Dietrichson, "The Fifteenth Wisconsin, or Scandinavian Regiment," in O. N. Nelson (ed.), *History of the Scandinavians in the United States* (2d ed., Minneapolis, 1904), part 1, 155. This article was originally published in *Scandinavia*, I, 297-300. Cf. *Emigranten*, March 17, 1862, 2-3.

⁶⁹ Much has been written in the Norwegian language about the Fifteenth Wisconsin. The first history was J. A. Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie* (1869). See above, note 12. O. A. Buslett, *Det Femtende Regiment Wisconsin Frivillige* (Decorah, Iowa, 1895) is an entertaining and unreliable book of 696 pages. P. G. Dietrichson, *En Kortfattet Skildring af det femtende Wisconsins Regiments Historie og Virksomhed under Borgerkrigen* (Chicago, 1884) is a brief sketch of 32 pages. It is also published in an English version. See above, note 68. Waldemar Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, is valuable chiefly for the diary of Bersven Nelson (15-61), the diary of Morten J. Nordre (154-59), and approximately one hundred Civil War letters written by soldiers of the Fifteenth (74-165, 235 ff.). There are chapters by Mr. Ager on some of the battles in which the regiment participated, and other phases of its history. Mr. Ager has published many articles on the Fifteenth, among which may be noted: "Det norske regiment i Slaget ved Chickamauga," *Nordmands-Forbundet*, VI, no. 3 (Sept., 1913), 492-501; "Tapene i det norske regiment under borgerkrigen," *ibid.*, IX, no. 3 (March, 1916), 162-69; "The Fifteenth Wisconsin," *American Scandinavian Review*, III, 325-33. Selections from letters written by the surgeon of the Fifteenth are in Luther M. Kuhns, "An Army Surgeon's Letters to his Wife," *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association for the Year 1913-1914*, 306-320. No satisfactory regimental history of the Fifteenth Wisconsin has appeared in English. Some information is in Charles E. Estabrook, *Records and Sketches of Wisconsin Organizations*. . . (Madison, 1914), 136-37.

⁷⁰ Ager, "Tapene i det norske regiment under borgerkrigen," *Nordmands-Forbundet*, IX, 162-69. The percentage of losses sustained by the Fifteenth Wisconsin, according to Mr. Ager, was 33.04. Cf. Charles E. Estabrook (ed.), *Wisconsin Losses in the Civil War* (Madison, 1915), 74-79.

absence and one period of illness Heg was constantly with his regiment and brigade during these two years. In camp, on the march, and in battle, he shared their hardships, led them, and won their love and devotion.

The pictures of Colonel Heg reveal a tall, straight, military figure. His facial appearance was somewhat similar to that of Stonewall Jackson. Of commanding presence, Colonel Heg appeared to be considerably older than he was. His age, in fact, was less than thirty-four when he met his death at Chickamauga. A careful and critical observer, Colonel Heg was at the same time quiet in demeanor and somewhat taciturn. He fraternized rarely with his soldiers and has been described as an officer who did little consciously to win the hearts of his men. For himself he loved and trusted his soldiers and was ready at all times to risk his life for them. A student of the Fifteenth Wisconsin and its history asserts that Heg was not the type of leader for whom soldiers are eager to die, but rather the type who faced death for his soldiers—an assertion that seems to be substantiated by the history of the regiment.⁷¹ An effective disciplinarian in the army, Heg could prove a jovial companion outside the service. As an officer he was spirited and intelligent, uniting the spirit of caution with seeming recklessness. Veterans of his regiment delight to recall his ability to dissipate discouragement and to inspire cheer and confidence. Something of this is evident in a letter from Colonel Heg, dated February 15, 1863, near Murfreesboro.⁷² The letter was an acknowledgment of the receipt of gifts for sick and wounded soldiers from a soldiers' aid society in Wisconsin. His men, he says, have risked their health and lives for a cause vital to all. Appreciation at home is both an encouragement and an incentive to the soldiers. "Our army must and will crush this terrible

⁷¹ Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, 249.

⁷² The letter is in *ibid.*, 163-64. It is translated in part in T. C. Blegen, "Colonel Hans Christian Heg: American," *The North Star*, I, 93-94.

rebellion if our people in the North will make common cause with the army and do all in their power to encourage the soldiers No encouragement is more effective than that which comes from home . . . If a mother has a son, or a wife a husband, in the army, her letters encouraging him to do his duty will be worth more than anything else. Persistent complaints, lamentations, and prayers for his return home, do more to spread despondency and finally sickness than the physical dangers through which soldiers must pass There is no alternative but this: death and destruction for us and our Government, or the crushing of the rebellion. The latter must be accomplished, no matter what sacrifices be demanded—even though it entails loss of life, property, and everything else.”

Like all the other regiments, the Fifteenth Wisconsin had to meet tests of endurance in long and rapid marches over unfamiliar ground and in skirmishes too numerous to mention. Throughout these and other hardships Colonel Heg was with his men, cheerfully accepting every situation, and encouraging those under him. While his military career in general is the story of his regiment, a number of his acts merit special mention and may illustrate some of the observations made concerning his character.

The regiment took part in the battle of Perryville on October 8, 1862, and at one stage in this fight made an effective charge.⁷³ Not a single soldier of the Fifteenth was killed in this battle, however. At Stone's River, between December 30 and January 3, 1862–63, the regiment was not so fortunate and suffered heavy losses, including its lieutenant colonel and other officers. Colonel Heg realized that the mettle of his men was to be severely tested in this battle and near its beginning he encouraged his soldiers by riding along the firing line in front of the troops. Lieutenant Colonel McKee urged him not to expose himself but Colonel

⁷³ Ager, “Slaget ved Perryville,” *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, 181–84.

Heg affected not to hear him. Suddenly his horse was struck by a shot, and both horse and rider rolled to the ground. By good fortune Heg was unhurt, however, and his gallantry appreciably strengthened the morale of his waiting soldiers.⁷⁴

During the same battle Colonel Heg displayed bravery in the storming of Knob Gap, a gorge fortified by eight pieces of artillery and a force of dismounted cavalry. A brigade line of skirmishers was led by Lieutenant Colonel McKee; after them came the main body of the brigade headed by Colonel Heg. The position was taken, and a cannon captured. It is said that the regiment loved its colonel after Stone's River more than ever before, for it was clear to them that he did not expect his soldiers to go where he himself would not go. Eighty-five members of the Fifteenth Wisconsin were killed or wounded, with thirty-four missing, as a result of this battle.⁷⁵

In February, 1863 Colonel Heg commanded temporarily the second brigade, and on May 1 he was placed in permanent command of the third brigade of the first division, twentieth army corps—his own regiment, the Fifteenth, being at the same time transferred to this brigade.⁷⁶ While in temporary command of the second brigade, he participated in an exploit that won him a considerable reputation for daring. The brigade was engaged on March 4, 1863 in an expedition from the vicinity of Murfreesboro to Shelbyville. At one point Colonel Heg halted the brigade and selecting a few companions started upon a circuitous way through the woods in order to surprise the rebel pickets

⁷⁴ Ager, "Slaget ved Murfreesboro eller Stone's River," *op. cit.*, 185-99. Mr. Ager prints a letter written Jan. 11, 1863, by Lieutenant Chantland, a participant.

⁷⁵ Dietrichson, "The Fifteenth Wisconsin, or Scandinavian Regiment," in Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in the United States*, part 1, 158-59. Langeland, "Oberst H. C. Heg," in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 107. In his report of the battle, the brigade commander wrote, "While every field officer under my command did his duty faithfully, Colonels Alexander and Heg, in my opinion, proved themselves the bravest of the brave." *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. XX, part 1, p. 282.

⁷⁶ Buslett, *Det Femtende Wisconsin Frivillige*, 295.

stationed on the main turnpike. With two officers Heg rode ahead of the rest of the scouting body when he suddenly came upon the enemy pickets. Heg was armed only with a sword; his two companions were unarmed. They immediately dashed forward, however, and succeeded in taking the pickets prisoners. The Colonel waited until his followers came up and then sent a detachment forward to find out the position of the rebel reserves.⁷⁷

In the opening phase of the Chickamauga campaign Colonel Heg's brigade had the distinction of being the first to cross the Tennessee River, a feat accomplished at day-break on August 29, 1863. Pontoon boats were put in place at Caperton's Ferry; the brigade crossed them, drove away the cavalry of the enemy, and occupied the southern bank of the river. A twelve-hundred-foot pontoon bridge was then completed, and the whole division under General Davis, to which Heg's brigade was attached, then crossed. The regiment and brigade, as well as Colonel Heg himself, distinguished themselves in this movement.⁷⁸

The Fifteenth Wisconsin was one of five infantry regiments from the Badger State that took part in the bloody battle of Chickamauga. The record of these regiments, as told in Fitch's *The Chattanooga Campaign*, is one of gallant fighting against great odds, and of tremendous losses. The Fifteenth came out of the battle with only a small band of survivors; it would probably have gone out of existence but for the arrival of two companies which had been left in garrison at Island No. 10. On September 19, 1863, the first day of the battle, the regiment lost seven officers and fifty-nine enlisted men; and the losses of the second day brought the total to one hundred eleven.⁷⁹ The regiment

⁷⁷ Johnson, *Det. Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 45. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. XXIII, part 1, 138-39, for Heg's own report.

⁷⁸ Michael H. Fitch, *The Chattanooga Campaign* (Wisconsin History Commission, Original Papers, No. 4), 59. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. XXX, part 1, 485, 496-97.

⁷⁹ Fitch, *The Chattanooga Campaign*, 130-31.

served in Heg's brigade, Davis' division of the twentieth corps. The story of this sanguinary battle is one of fighting at close quarters, of soldiers on both sides fully exposed to enemy fire, of advance and withdrawal through underbrush and in the open, of repeated attacks and counterattacks. The Fifteenth Wisconsin had been sent forward on the first day with the Eighth Kansas at its left, both being supported by a second line including the rest of Heg's brigade. During the severe fighting that ensued the Kansas regiment withdrew, leaving the Fifteenth unsupported on the left and compelling it to fall back. An Illinois regiment was brought up; the lines were reformed; and a spirited charge was made against the enemy, driving them back two hundred yards. The enemy countered, forcing the Illinois troops back, and the Fifteenth suddenly found itself between the fire of Confederates and Federals.⁸⁰ It was obliged to retire as best it could. During the day's fighting Colonel Heg was in the midst of his regiments, cheering them and encouraging them both by his words and by his personal bravery. With his brigade outnumbered and being forced back, he was constantly heartening his men and attempting to stop the forward movement of the enemy. When the Twenty-first Illinois arrived the lines were broken and were being driven back. Colonel Heg rode forward, waved his hat to the soldiers, and ordered them to follow him. They stormed forward with a cheer and were successful in hurling the enemy back a considerable distance.⁸¹ An interesting description of this fighting was written by a correspondent of the *Cincinnati Commercial* and reprinted in the *State Journal* of Madison, Wisconsin:⁸²

⁸⁰ Dietrichson, in Nelson, *History of the Scandinavians in United States*, part 1, 160. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. XXX, part 1, 498-99.

⁸¹ Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 108.

⁸² Issue of Oct. 30, 1863. This account is similar in all essential matters to that contained in an official report by Colonel John A. Martin, Heg's successor as commander of the brigade, dated Sept. 28, 1863. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and*

The Third Brigade, Colonel Heg commanding, had hardly advanced fifty yards when the enemy suddenly opened on it a destructive fire. The Second Brigade had not yet formed into line, but was rapidly doing so, three regiments to the right and one on the left of the Third Brigade; all some thirty yards to the rear. The troops of the Third Brigade pressed vigorously forward, firing promptly and with coolness, as they advanced. Its flank, however, was exposed; a wide gap being between it and the troops on the left; its right was the extreme right of the troops in this vicinity. The firing at this time was terrible, and the stream of wounded to the rear was unprecedentedly large. Bullets tore through the ranks; grape and cannister flew whistling among the brave men, but they stood their ground, not yielding an inch.

In vain the rebel hosts pushed forward; in vain they brought fresh troops—the desperate valor of the men resisted every effort to drive them back. For three quarters of an hour this small brigade held them at bay. But its flanks, those weakest points of an army, were exposed, and the enemy struck at these, and pouring through its gap on the left and right, subjected it to a terrible enfilading fire. Colonel Heg, the brave brigade commander, reluctantly gave the order to fall back, and the men slowly retreated, until they reached Carlin's Brigade, loading and firing as they went. Here the Third Brigade again reformed and the division again united, charging the enemy, driving them until it had reached the ground occupied by the Third Brigade before it fell back. For a quarter of an hour they held this position, the rebels massing column after column and hurling them with desperate valor against their thrice decimated ranks.

Captain Albert Skofstad, of Company D, Fifteenth Wisconsin, writing to the Milwaukee *Sentinel* on October 20, 1863, thus describes the final act in the military career of Colonel Heg:⁸³ "Throughout all those hours of severe danger and exposure, Colonel Heg was ever prompt at his post, always courageous and self-possessed. Not once did he falter or swerve from his duty . . . His comrades fell

Confederate Armies, series 1, vol. XXX, part, 1, 528-31. Col. Martin mentions with special praise the gallant work of Heg. A report by Captain Mons Grinager of the Fifteenth Wisconsin is in *ibid.*, 533-34. "Skandinaverne ved Chickamauga," *Emigranten*, Oct. 12, 1863, deals with the part played by Scandinavians in the battle.

⁸³ The letter is reprinted in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, Oct. 27, 1863. "From early childhood his characteristic has been that of cheerfulness and patience," wrote Skofstad. "One could not associate with him without feeling the magic of his power to dispel gloom and sorrow. In the hour of death this did not desert him. The same peaceful atmosphere which surrounded him in life did then. From the nature of his wound his sufferings were severe, but he uttered no complaint. . . ." At Heg's own request, Skofstad accompanied his body home to Muskego. Langeland gives a somewhat different account of the circumstances of the wounding of Colonel Heg. Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 109. Cf. Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, 251; Fitch, *The Chattanooga Campaign*, 87; letter of Lieut. Col. Johnson, dated Libby Prison, Nov. 3, 1863, in *Wisconsin State Journal*, Dec. 23, 1863.

at right and left, still he rallied on. From noon until sundown he was constantly exposed to the fearful fire of the enemy. It was at this hour, when his day's work was so nigh done, that a ball from a sharpshooter's rifle pierced his bowels, causing the mortal wound. He did not stagger or fall, but even when death stared him in the face, full of life and ambition, and true to his manliness, he once more rallied his men, and rode on for about a quarter of a mile. Loss of blood enfeebled him, and he was obliged to resign his command. He was taken to a hospital, where he passed the weary night in suffering"

Several officers of the Fifteenth Wisconsin visited their fallen chief as he lay on his deathbed on the night of September 19. In response to one officer, who told Colonel Heg that he had heard of his gallantry during the battle, and that the boys of the Fifteenth would have been glad to see him, he answered, "Tell my boys of the Fifteenth that I kept myself where I was needed, and that I knew they did not need me."⁸⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Johnson wrote thus of his visit to Heg: "I knew that I had looked into the face of our beloved colonel for the last time, and he was dearer to me now than ever before. He said to me that he was glad that the Fifteenth had held their places like men and had done their duty to the last."⁸⁵ According to Langeland, Colonel Heg said that he was willing to die, for he knew that his life was given for a just cause, and that he was but one of hundreds of thousands who had laid down their lives, gladly sacrificing them on the altar of their country.⁸⁶ These humble and noble words may perhaps be said to typify Heg's attitude with respect to his own personal part in the great struggle.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Ager, *Oberst Heg og hans Gutter*, 252. This evidence seems to cast some doubt upon the assertion that Heg fell in front of the Fifteenth Wisconsin while leading a bayonet charge. *Ibid.*, 251.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 54.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

The following morning, September 20, 1863, shortly before twelve o'clock, Colonel Heg passed away.⁸⁷ In the regiment as well as in the whole brigade his loss was deeply mourned. He had apparently won the respect and love of his soldiers to a peculiar degree. One of his captains wrote, "We miss him in our every-day life, in the home circle there is a vacancy that can never be filled. We miss him in our regiment, for he was more than a friend to us all. The influence he exerted among us will long be felt. Our hearts are crowded with sorrow, but there is consolation in the thought that he died in the noblest of causes."⁸⁸ Chief of the brigade, he would probably have been made a brigadier general in a short time, had he lived. In fact, General Rosecrans is reported to have said, when informed of Heg's death, "I am very sorry to hear that Heg has fallen. He was a brave officer, and I intended to promote him to be general."⁸⁹

We can not follow further within the limits of this article the history of the Fifteenth Wisconsin. It played a bloody and brave part in the second day's fighting at Chickamauga. Lieutenant Colonel Johnson was taken prisoner and conveyed to Libby Prison, from which he later escaped and made his way back to the regiment, becoming its colonel. The regiment was present at the taking of Missionary Ridge and took part in the march into Georgia. Its organizer and first leader was brought back to Muskego and buried with fitting honors in the churchyard of the Norwegian pioneer settlement to which, twenty-three years before, his father's family had come as immigrants.

His home state mourned with his home community when the news of his death became known. The *Wisconsin State Journal* echoed scores of newspaper comments when it

⁸⁷ *Wisconsin State Journal*, Oct. 27, 1863.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ According to Captain Grinager. Johnson, *Det Skandinaviske Regiments Historie*, 55-56.

said, "The State has sent no braver soldier, and no truer patriot to aid in this mighty struggle for national unity, than Hans Christian Heg. The valorous blood of the old Vikings ran in his veins, united with the gentler virtues of a Christian and a gentleman."⁹⁰ On October 3, 1863 a meeting of Scandinavians was held at Madison, where appropriate resolutions were adopted as a tribute to Colonel Heg. The concluding section of these resolutions was as follows: "Resolved, That we mourn his untimely death, not as a loss sustained by individuals only, but as a loss inflicted upon a people who loved and respected him for his unswerving honesty, excellent ability and exalted patriotism, whom he so honorably and faithfully represented, and who will ever cherish his memory with the deepest and sincerest affection."⁹¹

Colonel Heg has often been spoken of as a Norwegian, and still more often as a Norwegian-American. These are both honorable titles. It is perhaps more appropriate, however, simply to say that he was an American. His is a story of one who threw himself wholly into the currents of the life of the new and adopted country. Without reserve he gave the best that he had to America. He knew the trials as well as the opportunities of pioneer life in the West. He learned to believe in and to cherish our American institutions and ideals. A man of the West, he joined the mighty throng that brought California into the Union. He served his community in many humble local offices. Chosen by popular election, he served the people of his state in a not unimportant official capacity. Finally, he gave himself without qualification to his country when its flag was in peril, and, leading a brigade of the American army, he died fighting for that flag.

⁹⁰ *Wisconsin State Journal*, Sept. 29, 1863.

⁹¹ *Wisconsin State Journal*, Oct. 7, 1863.